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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes an examination and critique of literature related to the application of developmental theories to teacher education. Analysis of selected readings revealed a weak bond between the theoretical framework of developmentalists and concrete practices. It was concluded that, though much may be gained from a developmental theory of teacher change, a formal theory does not exist. Existing attempts either stop short of linking developmental theory to teacher change or describe teacher change without providing an encompassing theory. A bibliographic essay, based on research on the writings of prominent developmentalists, is presented. Appended are forty-three reference citations. (JD)

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The Relationship of Adult Developmental Theories to Teacher Education

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Introduction

This paper summarizes a recently completed examination and critique of literature related to the application of developmental theories to teacher education. We began this project with the hope that a careful examination of the literature on teacher development would enable us to put into proper perspective:

1) The goals for teacher education implicit in each developmental approach;
2) The strategies proposed for promoting teacher development;
3) The implications of approaches to teacher development for the promotion of educational equity.

Though encouraged on many sides to put forth our own position on development in teacher education, we resisted, saying that the task of understanding the positions of others was ambitious enough.

We have learned much during our work on this project. Although we could finish the tasks set for ourselves, we found that some were less important than we initially believed. Rather we came to see that it was more important to analyze the general strengths and weaknesses of a developmental approach in teacher education, than to focus on work reported in the existing literature. To complete this additional task, we did what we initially resisted--present our own interpretation of development. By taking this broader perspective, we were also able to offer a more general discussion of the link between development and equity, using existing developmental approaches as illustrations.

A short history of the project

This project grew out of our conviction that research and practice in teacher education could be improved through greater attention to the goals of teacher education. Though no single set of goals for teacher education is anywhere set in stone, research and practice in teacher education must be guided by some set of goals. We believe that it is desirable to be clear about what goals are being held, and about the reasons for supporting those particular goals. Only if attempts are made to provide defensible goals of teacher education, can those goals be a subject of rational discussion.

We chose to analyze the literature on developmental theories in teacher education in the hope that clear statements of goals and of the rationale for the goals would emerge. We hoped that the literature on teacher development would provide a model of the explication and defense of goals of teacher education, a model that others might then follow in describing and defending other goals.

We intended to produce one paper reviewing the implicit and explicit goals of various proponents of teacher development, and another paper reviewing the ways in which these goals might be reached. In each case the review was to give a clear explication of the views held by a particular group of developmentalists, describe the rationale behind their position, and then critically review the position and rationale. A third paper would look at the equity implications of developmental approaches to teacher education.

A review panel pressed us to be clearer about our own conception of "development" in the context of teacher education, though we initially thought that we could avoid taking any stand. By the time drafts of some of our papers were available (Floden & Feiman, Note 1; Feiman & Floden, Note 2) our reviewers could be clearer about problems apparent in our efforts. They drew our attention to the fact that we seemed to have somewhat conflicting purposes for our work. On the one hand we could review the work in teacher education that uses developmental language, and critique it. On the other hand, we could take a stand on what it might mean to adopt a developmental approach in teacher education. That would require consideration of the general problems of construction and using development theories to describe and foster teacher change. No one paper could serve both purposes, and both initial drafts were flawed for trying.

Following the advice of our review panel, we designed papers to serve each purpose separately. The projected papers on criteria and interventions were combined into a single paper reviewing the work on approaches to teacher education that use developmental language (Feiman & Floden, 1980). An additional paper was written on the generic problems which arise with developmental approaches to the study and support of teacher change (Floden & Feiman, Note 3). The paper on problems of equity and development remained as initially proposed, but focused on general problems, using specific developmental practices as illustrations (Floden & Feiman, Note 4).

The remainder of this paper is a short bibliographic essay based on our work.

The State of the Field of Teacher Development

As we read through articles that claimed to take a developmental approach to the study or practice of teacher education, we were struck by the loose link between the concrete practices or descriptions and the underlying theoretical frameworks. Weak bonds between theory and practice are all too common in teacher education (and indeed in most applied areas), but the emphasis which developmentalists seem to place on theory led us to expect a tighter connection. Often, some of the best ideas seem least dependent on the theoretical framework. Though much may be gained from a developmental theory of teacher change (see Floden & Feiman, Note 3), such a theory does not exist. Existing attempts either stop short of linking developmental theory to teacher change, or describe teacher change without providing an encompassing theory.

We have come across a number of individual papers claiming to link some developmental concept or theory to teacher education, but the central body of literature can be separated into four categories according to the group of people working along the same lines. Three of these categories have been described in our earlier work (Feiman & Floden, Note 5), and discussed in greater depth in one of the products of this project (Feiman & Floden, 1980), work by Fuller, Hall, and their associates; work by Sprinthall, his colleagues, and their students; and work by teachers' center staff and advisors. The fourth category is the work of Ryan and his students at Ohio State University. Since we have discussed the work in the first three categories at length, here we will only point to articles that seem particularly important to understanding each approach. The available literature from the fourth category is still limited, and we describe it here. We conclude this bibliographic review with a discussion of some of the critiques of developmental theories, particularly those of Piaget and Kohlberg. Since these two men have had a substantial influence on the thinking about development in American education, it seems important to understand the limitations of their work.

Fuller & Hall

Fuller's early publication (1969) continues to be one of the most cited references on teacher development. Though not stated explicitly in that paper, Fuller's progression on concerns was based on Maslow's needs hierarchy. Fuller modified her ideas repeatedly in the years before her death, though her thoughts continued to reflect her background and experience in counseling psychology. The stages of concern went through several modifications, and later work (esp. Fuller & Bown, 1975) placed increasing emphasis on ways for influencing progress through the stages--personalizing teacher education and arousing concerns (Fuller, Parsons & Watkins, 1974; Fuller, Note 6, Note 7). Stayrook and Cooperstein (Note 8) have prepared a valuable guide to the numerous unpublished papers by Fuller and her co-workers.

The work of Hall and his colleagues applies many of Fuller's ideas to the context of innovation adoption, rather than teacher change. Some of this work continues the emphasis on concerns (Hall & Loucks, 1978), other efforts add dimensions related to actual use of innovations (Hall & Loucks, 1977) and to the match between the innovation in use and what the designers of the innovation had in mind (Hall & Loucks, Note 9).

Sprinthall

Sprinthall and his colleagues and students at the University of Minnesota have argued that the developmental theories of Kohlberg (1969), Loevinger (1976) and Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder (1961) have direct application as theories of teacher development (Witherell & Erickson, 1978). He goes on to argue that a part of that application is the adoption of later developmental stages as goals for teacher education (Sprinthall, Note 10). Though the link between the developmental theories and the teacher education practices are often obscure, the practices are clearly the product of much time and effort. Both preservice (Glassberg & Sprinthall, 1980) and inservice (Oja & Sprinthall, 1978; Sprinthall & Bernier, 1978) programs have been developed and studied.

Teachers' centers and advisors

Perhaps because the teachers' center staff and advisors are primarily practitioners and not researchers, the literature on this approach to teacher development is less readily available and harder to track down. We have found the book that Devaney edited (Note 11) particularly helpful, especially her own essays in that volume. These essays give a good portrayal of the underlying rationale for this approach. The report of a study by Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel (1976) gives a stimulating account of different ways of thinking that teachers have about their professional activities. In many ways the material in that book comes the closest to a description of the

"cognitive structures" of teachers, with indications of differences among teachers. The authors stop short of a cohesive theory of teacher development, and often only hint at the theoretical ideas that undergird their work. Two notable descriptions of teachers' professional stages are those by Apelman (Note 12) and Field (Note 13).

Most of the literature in this approach is characterized by a tension between ideological commitments and the desire to report results of scientific and practical inquiry. Most individuals writing in this approach are strong advocates of a student-centered approach to education and teacher education, much like the approach often associated with British infant schools and open education (though open education encompasses a great many other things as well). This advocacy often leads researchers and practitioners to cast their writing in terms of an argument for the superiority of this approach, though, problematically, sometimes purporting to present unbiased descriptions of teachers and teacher change.

Ryan

Ryan (Note 14) and several of his students have attempted to look at the stages in teachers' lives through interviews with teachers of different levels of experience: first year teachers (Johnston, Note 15), second year teachers (Applegate & Lasley, Note 16), middle-aged teachers (Newman, 1978), and retired teachers (Peterson, 1978). For the last two groups especially, the interviews ask the teachers to look back over their experiences. These investigators have framed their work using the concepts of adult life stages (Gould, 1972; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & Braxton, 1978; Neugarten, 1968; Super, 1975), many of which were popularized in Passages (Sheehy, 1974).

As these authors acknowledge, cross-sectional studies have limited value for describing developmental changes, particularly when the time frame is large. It is difficult to tell whether changes retired teachers report in their attitudes toward students are better attributed to changes in the teacher or to changes in the student population and in the patterns of behavior in society. These studies are also limited as studies of teacher development because the theoretical framework has not been adapted to fit the life of the teacher, qua teacher. It may be important to study adult development to see how it contributes to our understanding of teachers as people, but that is different from a study of teachers as changing professionals.

Critiques of developmental theories

Questions about developmental theory and practice have multiplied in recent years. Several of the problems raised have been discussed in our other papers (Feiman & Floden, 1980; Feiman & Floden, Note 2; Floden & Feiman, Note 1, Note 3, Note 4). Here we describe a small part of that literature, dividing the literature discussed into two

categories: criticisms of pupil-centered education and criticisms of cognitive-developmental theories.

The developmental approach associated with teachers' centers and advisors places great emphasis on self-directed learning and freedom of choice for the pupil. A recurrent problem with this approach to education is the tendency to confuse relating educational activities to the child's prior knowledge with allowing the child to learn whatever he or she chooses. Self-directed learning means (at least for someone like Dewey) that the child must actively relate new knowledge to old. It does not mean that the child will progress in desirable directions if left to his or her own devices. This confusion runs throughout the progressive education movement (Burnett, 1979), and continues to be troublesome in this approach to teacher development. Dearden (1976, Ch. 4) has written a particularly clear statement of the problem.

Piaget and Kohlberg are the primary figures in the American literature on cognitive-developmental theories. Though most critics find much of value in these theories, their weaknesses have been increasingly apparent. Phillips and his collaborators have written a number of papers challenging the notion of invariant, universal sequences (Phillips, in press; Phillips & Kelly, 1975; Phillips & Nicolayev, 1978) and of the inferences made to support the stage theory. Other critics of the stage theory and its empirical support include Peters (1972) Toulmin (1971: Feldman & Toulmin, 1976), Hamlyn (1971, 1978, Donaldson (1978), and Kurtines and Creif (1974).

The Piagetian mechanism for change has been seen as obscure, confused and contradictory (Haroutunian, 1978, 1979; Phillips, in press; Rotman, 1977; Haroutunian, Note 17, Note 18). A recent debate between Piaget and Chomsky (with other prominent commentators) focuses on problems with the learning mechanism in Piagetian theory (Piatelli-Palmarini, 1980).

A final problem area is the accusation that Kohlberg's stages represent a narrow, biased view of moral judgment. Gilligan (1977) draws attention to the male bias in the theory, Sullivan (Note 19) points to cultural and class biases, while Peters (1971, 1975) shows the Kohlberg even fails to consider prominent philosophical schools (see also Schrag, 1973, and Oldenquist, 1979).

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